# The Split in German Social-Democracy

## Outset of the War

From the very outset of the war, there was no unity within the ranks of German Social-Democracy. Even before the first Reichstag vote on war credits, two tendencies had emerged within the parliamentary faction: one for and one against approving the credits.

During the initial vote, these internal factional disagreements were not yet brought before the full Reichstag session, a testament to the old party discipline. Since the 1875 Gotha unification between the Eisenachers and the Lassalleans, the party had always presented a united front against the bourgeoisie and the Junkers.

Even during the most acute periods of internal struggle between the orthodox Marxists and the revisionists, a unity of public action had been maintained. It was precisely this unity under which German Social-Democracy had grown and strengthened, transforming into a powerful party with over a million members, dozens of newspapers and journals, and so on. It is therefore understandable that many associated the successes of the socialist movement with this unity, and nothing else. Repeatedly, during stormy sessions at various party congresses, when polemics between representatives of different tendencies flared up with particular intensity and threatened a split, the leaders would remind everyone of the necessity of unity. The main argument of the late August Bebel* and others was that they must not grant the bourgeoisie a triumph—a bourgeoisie that, before almost every party congress, predicted the party's inevitable split.

*Bebel, August (1840–1913) – a prominent figure in the German and international workers' movement, one of the leaders and founders of German Social-Democracy and the Second International.

However, maintaining an external unity did not prevent the maturation of deep, principled disagreements within the party. The modern war merely brought long-debated points of party tactics into sharp relief, forcing the various tendencies to draw the logical conclusions from their views and, in its further development, leading to a breach of this unity.

The intense effort to present a united front at all costs in all external appearances did not stifle the growing awareness that, at a certain stage in the development of these disagreements, further preservation of unity was not in the interests of the socialist movement and could cause far greater harm than a complete break, a schism. The war merely completed the process of demarcation that had begun earlier.

## The Period of Struggle

During the period of struggle against revisionism (1898–1905), German Social-Democracy was divided into two parts: the orthodox Marxists and the Bernsteinian revisionists. Starting in 1905, a process of separation of the so-called Lefts from the orthodox camp began. Thus, the following grouping emerged: the Right (revisionists), the Centre (a section of the former orthodox), and the Left (the remaining orthodox).

From the moment the Lefts appeared, their recent comrades in the struggle against revisionism began to oppose them more zealously than they had their former opponents, the revisionists. From 1910 onwards, they directed almost all their blows against the Lefts. To crush the latter, the Centre usually united with the Right.

Disagreements among the orthodox first manifested themselves at the Jena Party Congress (1905) during the discussion on the mass strike. Here we already have, in embryo, the future three tendencies. While the revisionists considered the very discussion of the issue to be untimely, the Centre found it necessary to place it on the agenda, to outline possible cases for the application of the mass strike and the most favourable conditions for its conduct. The Lefts, unsatisfied with this, proposed conducting widespread propaganda among the masses for the idea of the strike.

Similar disagreements emerged at the subsequent Mannheim Party Congress (1906) on the same issue*. But these were merely, so to speak, outpost skirmishes. A lively polemic between the Centre and the Lefts began in 1910–1911, gradually taking on increasingly acute forms until it led to a complete demarcation.

*[Author's Note:] For characterising the conciliatory policy towards the revisionists, the following fact is interesting. Almost simultaneously with the Jena Party Congress, a congress of social-democratic trade unions was held in Cologne. There, the question of the mass strike was also discussed, and a resolution was passed condemning its discussion among the masses—a resolution that clearly contradicted the one passed by the Party Congress. At the Mannheim Congress, the Lefts pointed out this discrepancy, demanding that the union leaders align their party and trade union activities, subordinate themselves to the decisions of party congresses, and implement them within the unions. The Centre united with the Right and, glossing over the differences, passed a "wise" resolution stating that the resolution of the Cologne trade union congress did not contradict the Jena resolution.

## Complete Demarcation

The complete demarcation was thus the result of deep, principled disagreements within the ranks of German Social-Democracy. Indeed, from the period of 1910–1911 onwards, three distinct tendencies emerged on all major tactical questions: issues related to imperialism, colonial policy, militarism, the methods and forms of proletarian struggle, and so forth—all revealed three different lines of approach.

It must be said that the existence of several tendencies within a socialist party was by no means unique to Germany. We encounter it in France, England, Russia—everywhere where the socialist movement had emerged from its embryonic period and attained any significant size. This alone should suggest that there are deep-rooted causes for such divisions, common to various countries.

Therefore, by elucidating the reasons for the demarcation within the ranks of German Social-Democracy, we thereby obtain an explanation for such, and not some other, development of the socialist movement in other countries.

As already indicated, the period of struggle against revisionism was 1898–1905, while the process of separating the extreme Left from the ranks of the orthodox Marxists began in 1905 and was completed in 1910–1912.

The emergence and development of the revisionist movement in Germany was usually explained by two causes: first, the reflection of petty-bourgeois influence on the proletariat, and second, the industrial boom of the 1890s.

The capitalist mode of production, in its progressive motion, destroys the vital nerve of the petty bourgeoisie—small-scale production. The ranks of the petty bourgeoisie are continually thinning. A significant section of it sinks to a lower social level, becoming proletarians. Another section retains a semblance of independence, falling into complete dependence on the big bourgeoisie. A similar process, with some variations, occurs in agriculture. The ranks of the proletariat are continuously replenished by yesterday's "independent" petty bourgeois from town and country. This is the general law of capitalist development. It manifested itself in Germany no weaker, but rather stronger, than in other countries. The growth of the proletariat in Germany occurred faster than that of other classes; it grew at their expense. It is quite natural that a significant number of those from petty-bourgeois backgrounds, finding themselves in the ranks of the proletariat, also ended up in its trade unions and in the socialist party.

Germany's social development had thrust the proletariat forward as the sole fighter for the democratisation of the political system. Social-Democracy was the only democratic party. This situation led to the appearance within the proletarian party of elements socially alien to the proletariat. These elements cared very little for the distant "final goal". They were interested in the struggle for reforms. The "movement" itself within the framework of the modern capitalist system was what mattered to them. These elements could travel alongside the proletariat only up to a certain point—hence their name "Mitläufer" ("fellow-travellers").

Having attained quantitative significance, the newcomers from the petty bourgeoisie, together with the "fellow-travellers", exerted their own qualitative influence on the proletarian movement. It was they who pushed proletarian practice onto the path of opportunism; it was under their influence that a revision of the old theory and practice began; it was their interests and aspirations that were reflected in the appeal, issued from within Social-Democracy's own ranks, for it to become unequivocally a party of democratic and social reforms.

## Industrialization and Opportunism

The industrial development of that period facilitated the success of opportunist ideology. The phase of prosperity favoured the struggle for higher wages, a shorter working day, and general improvements in labour conditions. The bourgeoisie reaped enormous profits. In the interest of securing these profits unhindered, it strove for social peace, throwing crumbs from its profits to the proletariat. During the boom phase, the bourgeoisie offered relatively weaker resistance to various minor social reforms and social legislation.

At first glance, it created the impression that class contradictions were not sharpening with the further development of capitalism, but softening; that the chasm separating the proletariat from

the bourgeoisie was not widening, but narrowing; that the class struggle was not intensifying, but weakening.

To prove the truth and immutability of these propositions, a fundamental revision of the theoretical foundations of Marxism and the tactics derived from them was necessary.

The standard-bearer in this effort was Eduard Bernstein*, who immediately became the foremost apostle of revisionism, not only in Germany but internationally.

*Bernstein, Eduard (1850–1932) – leader of the extreme opportunist wing of German Social-Democracy and the Second International, renegade, theoretician of revisionism.

The struggle against Marxism raised by the revisionists did not go unanswered by its adherents. A fierce polemic ensued, as a result of which not a single stone was left standing in the entire theoretical structure of opportunism. Moreover, reality itself very soon cruelly mocked the revisionists' aspirations. In the early 1900s, the boom phase ended, a crisis broke out, followed by a long depression. Theoretically, revisionism was dead.

During this critical period, the orthodox Marxists, led by Kautsky, did work of enormous importance, defending proletarian theory and practice. In the process of struggle against revisionism, they widely popularised the ideas of revolutionary Marxism among the masses. However, by inflicting a crushing defeat on the theoretical constructs of revisionism, Kautsky and others, without realising it themselves, weakened the force and significance of this struggle. They did not draw practical conclusions from their blows; they did not carry their assessment of revisionism to its logical conclusion. While pointing out the bourgeois character of all revisionist pronouncements, they did not mention the necessity of a complete break with them. On the contrary, they constantly reiterated the need to preserve party unity. Arguing against the opportunist idea of "class collaboration," against the revisionists' striving to bloc with the liberal bourgeoisie—proving that from an alliance of revolutionaries with less oppositional elements, only the latter could gain—they failed to notice the possibility of themselves falling captive to the revisionists.

## Revisionist Triumph: Unity at All Costs

And in their striving to preserve practical unity at all costs, they continually capitulated to opportunist practice. Thus, having shattered revisionist theory, they were enslaved by its practice.

How could this happen? Why did the defeated, discredited revisionism ultimately triumph?

The development of revisionism in Germany in the period 1898–1905 was explained by the influence of petty-bourgeois elements entering the party and by industrial prosperity. But the industrial boom had already ended in 1901–1902. The crisis that broke out then contributed significantly to the theoretical overcoming of revisionism. Therefore, industrial prosperity cannot explain the tenacity and ultimate triumph of practical revisionism.

That leaves petty-bourgeois influence on the proletariat. Undoubtedly, its ranks continued to be replenished by people from the petty bourgeoisie. Undoubtedly, these newcomers exerted an influence on the practice of the class struggle. But, firstly, a section of the "fellow-travellers" fled Social-Democracy during the Reichstag re-elections of 1907, following its premature dissolution. Secondly, with further capitalist development, those layers of the proletariat whose

genealogy included several generations of pure proletarians were growing. However significant the influence of petty-bourgeois elements may have been, it alone, in my opinion, cannot explain the triumph of opportunist practice. This is all the more true since it is necessary to explain the shift specifically towards *right-wing* opportunism. The petty bourgeoisie itself can provide fertile ground for the development of *left-wing* opportunism, expressed in anarchism in its various forms, as can be seen by looking at the workers' movement in, for example, France or Italy.

Germany's industrial development over the last two to three decades proceeded with tremendous speed. No other country could compare with it in this regard. The following figures give some idea of this development:

**Coal Production (million tons)**
| Country | 1887 | 1912 | Increase (%) |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| Germany | 76 | 226 | +193.3% |
| England | 162 | 264 | +62.9% |
| France | 21 | 41 | +95.2% |

**Pig Iron Production (million tons)**
| Country | 1887 | 1912 | Increase (%) |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| Germany | 4 | 18 | +350.0% |
| England | 8 | 8 | 0% |
| France | 2 | 5 | +150.0% |

Simultaneously, there was rapid growth in the textile industry.
**Cotton Processing (million English pounds)**
| Country | 1887 | 1912 | Increase (%) |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| Germany | 281 | 1578 | +461.5% |
| England | 1339 | 2171 | +61.5% |
| France | 233 | 614 | +163.5% |

*[Author's Note:]* Figures taken from Mukoseev's article "The Economic Causes of the War" in the collection "Questions of the World War", "Pravo", Petrograd, 1915.

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## Capitalism in Germany

It is especially important to note the *forms* in which this powerful growth of the entire industry took place. The capitalist mode of production began to develop in Germany during a period when capitalism in some other countries, especially England, had already reached a high level of maturity. To compete more rapidly and successfully on the world market, to act as an equal capitalist power, Germany had to carry out its industrial evolution at an accelerated pace. It had to shorten as much as possible the transitional phases of development towards capitalism. And it could do this by adopting the ready-made technology and organisation of capitalist production.

Within a short time, German production achieved an unprecedented concentration. Powerful trusts and cartels developed rapidly, aided also by protectionist policies.

The more perfect organisation of production in Germany compared to England was conditioned by two extremely important circumstances. The organisation of production according to the latest technology was hindered by nothing. There was no old industry, as in England, in which large capitals had already been invested that could act as a brake. During the reorganisation of production, a significant part of the constant capital invested in the instruments of production becomes obsolete before its normal amortisation. Germany's second advantage lay in the close connection between industrial capital and bank capital from the very first major steps of capitalist development. This facilitated the transfer of capital from one branch of industry to another, and the savings of all strata of the population were made available for capitalist application.

The capitalist mode of production has gone through several phases of development on a world scale: from the dominance of merchant capital to industrial capital, and from the latter to financial capital. The dominance of financial capital signifies the highest stage of capitalist production. In it, "the specific, concrete character of capital dies away. Capital appears as a unitary power, which exercises sovereign domination over the life-process of society."*

*Hilferding, "Finance Capital", p. 355. [Author's Note]

In the last decade, financial capital in Germany had already achieved complete dominance. Capitalism reached an incredible concentration. All production was in the hands of six major banks.

Thanks to its perfect industrial organisation, Germany quickly managed to attain a noticeable position on the world market, and soon acquired a dominant position there, displacing the old capitalist countries.

The extremely rapid accumulation of capital, facilitated by that same perfect organisation of production, pushed Germany ever more strongly towards expanding its sphere of economic influence. Along with the growth of the mass of capital destined for accumulation, it was necessary to find opportunities for its application. The latter became possible only through the export of capital on an ever-increasing scale. And this meant an ever closer connection between German industry and the world market, an ever greater dependence on it.

This connection is superbly characterised by data on Germany's foreign trade.

**Foreign Trade (million marks)**

| | 1893 | 1913 | Increase (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Imports | 4,134 | 10,770 | +160.6% |
| Exports | 3,249 | 10,096 | +254.3% |

The close connection with the world market, the dominant position of German industry upon it, could not but be reflected in one way or another on the German proletariat. The workers' movement of each country is determined to a significant degree by the position of that country's industry on the world market. And the fuller the country's connection with it, the greater the role it plays there, the more complete this dependence.

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## The Foreign Policy

The foreign policy of the ruling classes is wholly determined by their country's position on the world market. And their domestic policy is heavily dependent on their foreign policy. The character of the workers' movement, the character of the proletariat's class struggle, is closely connected with the policy of the ruling classes. The policy of the proletariat is inherently antagonistic to that of the bourgeoisie. But at a certain period in a country's capitalist development, this antagonism can be concealed from the broad masses. Such obscuring of the antagonism is possible to a greater extent the more closely the country's industrial development is linked to the world market and the more dominant a position its industry occupies there.

The century-long history of the English workers' movement is the best illustration of these propositions. All historians of the English labour movement concur in explaining its trade-unionist character by the influence of England's dominance on the world market.

But the same influence was at work in Germany. Viewed from the angle of this influence, the entire process of demarcation that occurred within German Social-Democracy becomes understandable.

By the end of the 1890s, German industry already represented a significant force on the world market. Even then, the bourgeoisie of the old capitalist countries—England and France—was crying out about German competition. And in the last decade before the war, the cry about Germany's industrial hegemony became universal. And this cry reflected not an imaginary danger, but the most genuine reality. German goods were displacing English and French goods from their own possessions, from the metropoles as well as from the colonies.

As already indicated, Germany managed to achieve its dominant position thanks to its more perfect industrial organisation, thanks to the higher stage in its capitalist development—the stage of financial capital. The policy of the ruling classes was the policy of financial capital.

This policy "pursues a threefold aim: firstly, the creation of the largest possible economic territory; which, secondly, must be protected against foreign competition by tariff walls and thus must be transformed, thirdly, into an area of exploitation for the national monopolistic combines."* This policy is imperialism**.

*Hilferding, p. 495. [Author's Note]
**[Author's Note:] Inaccuracies in the analysis of imperialism and in the assessment of Hilferding's work are explained by Y. M. Sverdlov's lack of sufficient material and the complete impossibility, under conditions of prison and exile, of familiarising himself with V. I. Lenin's works on this question.

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## Beyond Liberal Bourgeoisie

Alongside capitalism's transition to this higher phase of development, the class character of the bourgeoisie changed, and its ideology changed. In the period of industrial capital's dominance, the bourgeoisie professed liberalism. Then it was by no means interested in increasing the political power of the state. For the bourgeoisie of that period, Marx's indication that the pure form of its political rule is the democratic republic was entirely correct. Then the bourgeoisie strove for the greatest possible freedom of the individual from any state tutelage.

It is a different matter with the ideology of the bourgeoisie under the dominance of financial capital. "Finance capital does not want freedom, but domination. It has no taste for the independence of the individual capitalist: it demands his limitation... For this it needs... a state

which can intervene everywhere in the world in order to turn the entire world into a sphere of investment for its finance capital."*** Financial capital, representing the unity of previously fragmented capital, completely subjugates state power to itself. The old antagonism between the industrial bourgeoisie and the landowners disappears. They are brought together by their now normal participation in all the parts into which surplus value is divided. In Germany, they were also brought together by a common protectionist policy. Both financial capital and large landed property desire protective tariffs. The struggle for agricultural tariffs, in turn, united large, medium, and small landownership. Simultaneously, a process of economic, and subsequently ideological, subordination of medium and small production to financial capital took place. If economically this subordination was characterised by indirect dependence, ideologically it was complete. Medium and small production was also strongly interested in the further development of a successful imperialist policy. The expansion of the sphere for capital application helped prolong the era of prosperity and postponed the crisis.

***Hilferding, pp. 511–512. [Author's Note]

Thus, as financial capital achieved dominance, a unified bourgeois mass was created. And it often confronted the working class as a reactionary mass. The imperialist aspirations common to this bourgeois mass provoked opposition from certain strata of the proletariat. The expansion of colonial policy, the associated increase in the army and navy, and hence the increased tax burden and the strengthening of state power—all this was against the interests of the proletariat. But to certain strata it seemed that it was precisely thanks to the dominant position of German industry on the world market that they enjoyed relative prosperity. It seemed to them that their interests in foreign policy coincided with the interests of the ruling classes. And from there it was but a short step to "class collaboration."

Thus, a part of the German proletariat fell under the ideological dependence of the imperialist bourgeoisie.

The dominance of financial capital became a fact for Germany. This dominance led to the strengthening of imperialism. And the ruling classes could pursue no other policy but an imperialist one. A section of the proletariat, recognising the inevitability of this policy, failed to realise that it was inevitable only for the bourgeoisie. By identifying the interests of German industry in that particular historical period with the interests of Germany as a whole, this section of the proletariat was inevitably carried away by the imagined benefits from the strengthening of their country's industry on the world market, benefits for themselves. All this led these strata of the proletariat to support imperialism and to abandon their own independent policy.

The petty bourgeoisie was unconditionally on the side of imperialism. And the part of the proletariat that retained ties with it could all the more easily come to recognise a commonality of its interests with imperialism's strengthening.

The opportunists reflected the impact of imperialist ideology on the proletariat. The strength of this influence explains the tenacity of opportunism and the ultimate victory of its practice over the orthodox theory that had dominated German Social-Democracy.

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## Dominance of Nationalism

From this point of view, the dominance of nationalism over internationalism within the German proletariat becomes entirely understandable. Voting for war credits, support for the state in its

military adventures—all this was laid down long before the war in the party's practice. Repeatedly, in response to accusations of unpatriotism from the bourgeoisie and Junkers, concrete representatives of Social-Democracy declared: "Wir sind gute Deutsche" ("We are good Germans"). And never was it declared that "wir sind gute Internationalisten" ("We are good internationalists"). August Winnig*, chairman of the Construction Workers' Union, quite correctly indicated the causes of nationalism when he wrote: "Every working class is very strongly interested in the prosperity of the national economy of its country... Here we have the ultimate reason for the phenomenon that workers decisively take the side of their state."**

*Winnig, August (b. 1878) – German right-wing Social-Democrat, defender of German imperialism, supporter of fascism.
**"Sozialistische Monatshefte", 1915, No. 1. Cited from Ensis's article in "Sovremenny Mir" (The Contemporary World), 1915, No. 6. [Author's Note]

The conduct of the opportunists, their tactics, were logically consistent throughout. If the working class is "interested in the prosperity of the national economy of its country," then it must support everything that contributes to such prosperity. The expansion of markets, a dominant position on the world market, is in the interests of the prosperity of German industry. The German bourgeoisie is also interested in this. The proposition about the intensification of the opposition of interests between the working class and the ruling class seems absurd given the presence of such important common, "national" tasks shared by them.

## Colonial Policy, Reformism and Yellow Unions

The prosperity of one's country's industry facilitates the implementation of workers' reforms. An active colonial policy, which contributes to the said prosperity, aids the improvement of the working class's condition. Such a policy can only be successful with a strong state possessing a good army and navy. The leaders of the trade unions, in every strike, have to take into account the current industrial conjuncture. In their daily practice, they become convinced of the enormous importance of market expansion—which postpones crises—and of the country's monopoly position on the world market. And it was the trade unions that most often came face to face with the significance of the "prosperity of industry" in their own country. Their struggle did not go beyond the framework of capitalist society and came closest to the "national tasks." Therefore, they represented the best soil for the development of nationalism and opportunism in general.

But they did not consider international workers' unity superfluous. It, too, is not without meaning. International agreements between workers of the same trade in different countries can, in turn, contribute to the success of trade union struggle. But it is merely an appendage to the national movement.

Thus, with the further development of imperialism, the opportunists fell increasingly under the influence of its ideology. They reflected the interests of those strata of the working class whose temporary gains coincided with Germany's imperialist development. They completely abandoned an independent class policy, and socialism became an empty phrase for them. Thereby, their break with the socialist movement became inevitable, and for the genuine representatives of the proletariat, joint work with them within the ranks of a single party was out of the question.

If the practice of the party's Right wing was in complete accordance with its general worldview, which was imperialist in essence, the same cannot be said of the Centre.

As already indicated, in the initial period of opportunism's development, the orthodox Marxists opposed it unanimously. The revisionists' demand that the party defend the interests of all democratic strata of the population, and not narrow its tasks to representing only the proletariat, was met with a united rebuff. The orthodox also unanimously proved the incorrectness of assertions about the victory of small-scale production over large-scale, about the mitigation of class contradictions, etc. The orthodox unanimously defended the basic tenets of revolutionary Marxism from the attacks of the revisionists. To the revisionists' gradual "growing into the state of the future"*, the orthodox counterposed the catastrophic path of development.

*[Author's Note:] As one of the left Social-Democrats quite correctly noted, "growth" was indeed happening, but "into the modern class state".

But this was only in theory. In practice, the orthodox differed little from the revisionists. The thoughts and strivings of both were directed towards the interests of the given moment; for both, the struggle for partial improvements, for reforms, constituted their entire practice. The only difference was that the orthodox simultaneously propagandised the inevitability of a fundamental upheaval in the future. Without linking their day-to-day work with socialism, without adapting their entire tactics to the coming social revolution, the orthodox educated the masses in the spirit of passive radicalism.

The general conditions of the proletariat's class struggle were changing, not only in Germany but in other countries. The need arose to adapt proletarian tactics to them. The era of the "peaceful" development of capitalism had passed. From a simple accumulation of forces, the proletariat had to move to more decisive forms of struggle. Only a section of the German orthodoxy took account of the changes that had occurred.

The further development of capitalism in various countries encountered obstacles. Capitalist accumulation had long since overflowed the national market. Clashes between different countries in the struggle to seize the world market became more frequent. The world was becoming too small for the capitalist mode of production.

German capitalism, having entered the arena of world struggle later, forced by fierce competition to wrest its share in the exploitation of other peoples, had to develop an especially aggressive policy. Financial capital, having achieved dominance, pursued its policy of imperialism, a path onto which other capitalist countries had also embarked. An era of intensified armaments began; military budgets in all countries grew with incredible speed, placing a heavy burden on the masses. An extremely tense international situation was created, threatening at any hour to turn into open conflict. Simultaneously, the internal situation changed. Financial capital is inherently anti-democratic. Having seized state power, subordinating it to itself in Germany (and not only in Germany), it could take the masses of the population even less into account. The significance of parliament, already not particularly great in Germany, declined. The working class was faced with the question of extra-parliamentary pressure on the ruling classes. Powerful employers' organisations created new conditions for the trade union struggle as well. Every partial, isolated conflict could and often did turn into a broad confrontation. The changed general conditions forced the proletariat to employ new forms of struggle.

The revolutionary events in Eastern Europe and in the Eastern countries also had their influence.

## Again on the Course of Events

A section of the orthodox, taking account of all the changes that had occurred and the international experience of the proletariat, put forward the idea of developing even greater activity among the broad masses. They gave a correct assessment of imperialism and called for a ruthless struggle against it and the militarism that accompanies it.

It was on the basis of the attitude towards imperialism and the new tactics that the division among the orthodox occurred.

The Centre, headed by Kautsky, was entirely under the sway of old traditions. The activity of Social-Democracy, as it had developed over the preceding period of historical development, seemed to him something given once and for all. It reflected the period of the proletariat's accumulation of forces. That period when capitalism had not yet reached the highest phase of its development—the phase of financial capital.

For decades, German Social-Democracy had carried out its work by "peaceful," "legal" means. It set itself the task of educating and organising the masses. All this work did not go beyond the bounds of bourgeois society. If the Right put the dot on the "i," adapting the party's theory to this practice, the Centre always had a discrepancy between the two. It did not push the socialist revolution as far into the future as the Right did, but, like them, it did not link its practice to it. The resolutions passed by party congresses, mostly orthodox, did not change the essentially opportunist practice.

In full agreement with the Right, the Centre fought within the party against all "innovations." If the old tactics had allowed Social-Democracy to gather a million members under its banner, if the social-democratic trade unions showed rapid growth, approaching three million, catching up with and surpassing the old English trade unions in membership numbers and funds, then there was no need whatsoever to change these tactics.

The Centre was supported by the broad masses of the proletariat. Educated for years in the spirit of the view that legality is only advantageous to the proletariat, that under it it "puts on red cheeks," these masses continued for a time to remain under the sway of passive radicalism. They placed all their hopes and aspirations on strengthening the influence of Social-Democracy in parliament and on the growth of their organisations. The impact of the imperialist policy pursued by the ruling classes had not yet touched them. They still stood with one foot on the soil of the old conditions of struggle and the forms developed under their influence.

## Summing Up

Thus, it becomes understandable why the Centre fell upon the innovators—the Lefts—and why it united with the Right to fight them.

The very points of disagreement between the Lefts and the Centre reveal, to a certain extent, the reason for their divergence.

For the Centre, the dominance of imperialist policy did not seem inevitable precisely in the form of constant mutual clashes between different states. Imperialism, if inevitable under the capitalist mode of production, could still be brought within peaceful bounds. If the

strengthening of militarism is its consequence, it is still possible to bring about its weakening through the struggle for the gradual disarmament of modern states.

The Lefts, on the contrary, regarded finance capital as the highest stage in the development of the capitalist mode of production. They considered imperialism the inevitable policy of dominant finance capital, against which it was only possible to fight by enhancing the activity of the broad proletarian masses, educated in the spirit of social revolution. Only such a revolution could put an end to imperialism and the militarism, increased tax burden, rising cost of living, and constant possibility of military clashes that accompany it, the weight of which would fall on the popular masses.

The Lefts also took into account the changes that finance capital had introduced into the mutual relations of various classes. They were far from being carried away by parliamentary struggle and vote-getting in elections. They ceased to view socialism as a "final goal" merely indicating the direction of struggle within the framework of the existing system. For them, socialism became the fundamental element in the entire daily proletarian struggle. Finance capital, in their opinion, had already prepared the objective conditions for a socialist system. The matter rested only on the subjective prerequisites for the revolution. To the policy of finance capital, the proletariat must counterpose socialism—this is the only answer of the proletariat to imperialism. And only by educating the proletarian masses in the spirit of activity can the socialist policy of the proletariat defeat the policy of finance capital. The old forms of struggle, the simple accumulation of forces around parliamentary work and in trade unions, did too little to develop the activity of the masses themselves. The conditions of struggle created by the dominance of finance capital brought extra-parliamentary struggle to the fore—the actions of the broad masses of the proletariat in the form of mass street demonstrations and mass strikes.

The application of new forms of struggle will draw into the movement layers of the proletariat not yet touched. The process of involving the masses will proceed the faster, the more fully Social-Democracy adapts its tactics to the new conditions of struggle. And the more successfully the development of the proletariat's class consciousness will proceed, the more clearly the party will link the collapse of imperialism and its inevitable results with the enhancement of proletarian activity. And the sooner the social revolution will arrive, the more correctly the proletariat anticipates the policy of the ruling classes.

The old organisations did work of enormous importance by uniting and educating the masses. The forms of struggle they employed will continue to perform great service in defending the interests of the proletariat. But the arsenal of proletarian weaponry must be augmented by the application of demonstrations and mass strikes. The period of accumulation of forces and the accompanying passive radicalism had passed. The time had come to deploy these forces more fully and to transition to active radicalism.

The tactics defended by the Lefts followed with complete inevitability from their assessment of the course of development of the capitalist mode of production. Their worldview was in complete antagonism to the opportunist one. Since the latter was essentially imperialist, the former was anti-imperialist.

The Right waged struggle within the framework of the existing system, did not go beyond its limits, and linked its successes with the accomplishment of the "national tasks" of their country. Social reforms are entirely possible to carry out on a national scale. Hence the nationalism of the Right.

The Left, without refusing social reforms, without refusing to fight for them, regarded them as a means to the main goal—the overthrow of capitalism, socialism. The temporary interests of

individual strata of the proletariat may coincide with "national tasks." But the interests common to the entire proletariat, the interests of the entire proletarian movement, are reducible to social revolution, which is possible only on an international scale. Hence the internationalism of the Left.

Let us summarise.

The Right reflected in their theory and practice Germany's dominance on the world market and linked the interests of the proletariat and the popular masses in general with its further strengthening and expansion. They were the ideological representatives of those strata of the proletariat whose temporary interests coincided with the development of German imperialism and who had not yet advanced to a consciousness of their common proletarian tasks. Simultaneously, they represented within the party those democratic strata of the German people who sought a change in the domestic policy of the ruling classes while supporting their imperialism, and who followed Social-Democracy as a democratic party, ignoring its socialist name.

If the Right wing reflected the *positive* influence of imperialism on the proletarian movement, the Left reflected its *negative* influence. It represented within the party the general interests of the proletariat as a whole and was recruited from those of its elements for whom the imaginary benefits of the moment did not obscure class consciousness.

The Centre occupied an intermediate position. It lacked the integrity and consistency characteristic of the Right and Left wings, which proceeded in their strivings from the new conditions of struggle. It stood, in the era of the dominance of finance capital and imperialism, on the preceding stage of capitalist development. It vacillated between the Right and Left wings, adhering theoretically closer to the Left, accepting almost entirely the practice of the Right, making constant unsuccessful attempts to reconcile its "two souls" pulling it in different directions. It united the broad proletarian masses, less affected by imperialism, who had already realised the incompatibility of their interests with capitalism but had not yet recognised the inevitability of its imminent end and the necessity of new tactics.

The behaviour of German Social-Democracy at the beginning of the war and in its further course was in complete accordance with this composition. If there was a contradiction, it was not with the party's previous practice, but with its resolution-based wishes.

In the process of the war, the old disagreements were merely brought to their logical conclusion. The positions of the Right and Left wings only gained greater clarity and completeness. And the step, which in peacetime the Centre, in agreement with party traditions, might have long restrained the Left wing from taking, was taken. The party's position had diverged so far from proletarian interests that for the genuine representatives of the proletariat, further cohabitation with the opportunists from the Right and Centre became impossible. They came out against the party majority. *Wer A sagt, muss auch B sagen* (He who says A must also say B). The Right, having stepped onto the ground of supporting imperialism, during the war rolled down the inclined plane with incredible speed. And they moved so far away from everything connected with socialism that in the end, even the Centre could not bear it. After long hesitation and delay, it too moved away, forming for now a separate faction in the Reichstag that votes together with the Lefts but speaks out against their extra-parliamentary activity.

The specific weight of each of the now disunited parts of German Social-Democracy changed greatly during the war and continues to change in the same direction—towards a strengthening of the Left.

In epochs of wars and revolutions, the consciousness of the broad masses grows with tremendous speed. The correlation of forces is far from accurately reflected in parliamentary groupings. The influence of the Left, even from the fragmentary information available to us, is strengthening within the proletariat at the expense of the Centre and the Right.

The masses of the proletariat had already begun to implement the tactics of the Left before the war. Recall the demonstrations against the high cost of living, the Moabit disturbances, the popularity of the mass strike in the struggle for suffrage in the Prussian Landtag, etc. With the further course of the war, their influence can only increase, because they most fully reflect the interests of the proletariat in the epoch of imperialism, which is pushing the working class towards the tactics indicated by the Left.

As for the Right, their break with socialism is becoming ever more complete, and they, I think, will soon turn—without reservations—into a party of social and democratic reforms, into a democratic party of the petty bourgeoisie, at whose tail a negligible stratum of the proletariat, more firmly hitched to the chariot of imperialism, will still plod along.

There is no future for the Centre in the socialist movement either. Part of the proletariat adhering to it has already gone either to the Right or to the Left. The majority has gone and will continue to go to the Left. But the intermediate layers will not disappear so quickly. The leaders of the Centre will still play a reactionary role, holding the proletariat back from the correct path. However, the influence of the Centre will become ever weaker. Without a firm, consistent position, not correctly reflecting the tasks of the working class, it is condemned by objective conditions to wither away.

Finance capital has led to such a concentration of all production that it has made the transition to socialised production very easy. Simultaneously, it has made utterly obvious its complete incompatibility with the interests of social development, of which it has already become a hindrance. Through its policy—imperialism—it has led to an enormous waste of society's productive forces, the further development of which is possible only through the planned regulation of production by the whole of society.

The tactics of the Left alone correspond to the development of the social productive forces. They alone correctly anticipate the process of social development. And the future of the proletarian movement belongs to the Left alone.

**1916. Y. SVERDLOV FROM TURUKHANSK EXILE.**

*PROLETARIANS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!*